INTERVIEW WITH UNITED STATES POLITICAL PRISONER, SUSAN ROSENBERG FOR CKLN RADIO, SATURDAY MORNING LIVE, BY [redacted]

The United States and Canada officially deny the existence of Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War in North America yet there are currently over 200 prisoners held in North American jails who are claiming Political Prisoner and Prisoner of War status.

Susan Rosenberg, Marilyn Buck, Linda Evans, Laura Whitehorn, Alan Berkman, Tim Blunk. These are the names of six American anti-imperialist political prisoners who, in May 1988, were charged with "conspiracy to influence, change and protest policies and practices of the US government concerning various international and domestic matters through the use of violent and illegal means." These activists, all except one, are currently serving sentences ranging between 12 and 70 years on separate charges related to the possession of weapons, false identification, and explosives and are suspected of organizing clandestine, armed actions against United States military industrial complex. They are accused of conspiring to carry out actions by urban guerilla cells known as the Revolutionary Fighting Group, Red Guerilla Resistance and the Armed Resistance Unit.

Next Thursday, Susan Redman's video, "Resistance Conspiracy", based on their upcoming case, will have its Canadian premier at the Euclid Theatre. Although the film deals specifically with the Resistance Conspiracy Six, the event is billed as "Who are the real terrorists? An evening with political prisoners in the USA".

On the line with us today from the Washington Jail, where she is currently being held, is Susan Rosenberg, one of the Resistance Conspiracy Six defendants. You may recognize Susan as one of the wimmin political prisoners who was formerly held in the Lexington Control Unit and subject of the recently-aired tv documentary, "Through The Wire". In 1982, Susan went underground after being charged in connection with the liberation of Black Liberation Army prisoner, Assata Shakur. Susan was arrested with co-defendant Tim Blunk in 1984 and charged with possession of explosives, weapons and false identification.

SM: Revolutionary Greetings, Susan and welcome to Saturday Morning Live.

SR: Thanks a lot, Revolutionary Greetings to you too and all of the people listening. I'd just like to say one thing from the Resistance Conspiracy Six defendants and that is we are really concerned about what's going on with the Mohawk struggle up there and we wanted to specifically express and send our support and solidarity.

SM: That is most appreciated Susan. Susan, you have a long history as an anti-racist and anti-imperialist activist in legal, above-ground community organizations. Can you tell us what motivated your transition to clandestine activity?

SR: Well, I think a number of factors. The emergence of clandestine organizations inside of the United States which occurred in the late 60s and throughout the 70s; the Puerto Rican Independence movement, and the whole idea and practical reality of the FALN, the Fuerzas Armadas de Liberacion Nationale, which was one of the more significant clandestine organizations in Puerto Rico, and in the United States, I think had a very big effect politically and an influential effect on a lot of us who were involved in public political work. I would say that, additionally, the whole attack by the state and the question of repression and realizing that there was in fact a counterinsurgency operation against all the radical forces in the United States, that had been going on from the cointelpro period, of the attack against the Black liberation movement in the United States in the 60s and 70s ~~and that~~, if we were going to survive that repression, we had to build structures and a practice that was away from the eyes and the ears of the state, because repression inside of the system is a constant. So I think we were confronted with a number of factors that came together for people who were involved in material aid and solidarity work with radical forces within the national liberation movement within the United States ~~were confronted with~~. It was a combination of both resistance and repression.

SM: As an anti-imperialist activist who's been involved in clandestine activity, how do you see that work relating to the work of those anti-imperialists who choose, say, material aid or more what they would term non-violence as a tactic and as a strategy? Do you see these efforts relating in any way?

SR: Well, I think that a lot of that answer depends on the development of a movement and the question of what are the objective conditions that exist inside any given situation. But I would say that I think that there's a spectrum of resistance that has to be developed and that that spectrum of resistance ranges in all kinds of tactics. I think that any movement that's serious about struggling for radical change and struggling to fight against the most repressive state apparatus has to have some kind of capabilities that are built into it. There's a very clear relationship between militancy and ~~with~~ the development of more militant forms that are going to push the whole movement to the left in terms of what that movement is capable of doing. I'm talking abstractly here because I've been in jail almost six years and before that I was in clandestinity for a number of years and to have a real good grip on the concrete conditions you have to make very specific analyses of your

conditions, so pardon me for being a little abstract. I guess I would say that one thing we know, and I think it's also very clear with what's happening now with the struggle of the indigenous people in Canada, is that when people take up a self-defense stance, and are going to defend their right for sovereignty or self- determination, for their own human rights, and they enact a self-defense strategy that has an armed capacity to it, the state is going to do everything that it can to intimidate, smash and destroy that. So I think that there's a real challenge that's being posed by some of what's going on now.

SB: Well, it's clear, you know from the state's behaviour thats they view your case as a political one and yet they attempt to destroy your base of public support through criminalisation. Can you explain the effects of criminalisation on the community, on yourselves, and what the implications of the state's strategy of criminalisation are.

SR: I think that criminalisation and isolation go hand-in-hand. It's a strategy that's part of the political repression that every government in power uses against it's own radical base -- the people inside this country who are revolutionaries, who have taken a position of saying that we will not let this go down quietly, we will not let this happen in our name or supposedly for our benefit. It has to be destroyed and what has to be destroyed is what the government perceives is the root. For us, where there are very small movements and very few people engaged in a radical political process, by putting the rubric of criminal activity over us as terrorists, which is the main form it's taken by the United States against the left in the 80s right. So you've got the anti-nuclear movement, who are called terrorists by this government. You've got us, who are defined as the most significant terrorists, or the last gasp of the 60s, as the government says. The effect of that is to really try and isolate us and to intimidate us from seeing what commonality or common ground might exist between our actions and our politics and what their actions and politics are. Unfortunately, at a certain level it's been a pretty successful strategy because to a large measure the left in the United States has not been willing to take a very strong position against that. That has taken the form, until very recently, of not supporting the existence of Prisoners of War from the Black liberation movement or from the Puerto Rican movement but allowing the United States government to define who is the criminal and who is not. No government and no state in power is going to recognize it's opposition; it's not something that a state will do until the forces are at some kind of equal balance where they have to. So criminalities really plays a major role. It's had a big effect on us because it's part of the strategy by the government to bury us--the political prisoners, in isolation units and control units in this country all over the United States.

SM: As you mentioned, there are more than 200 Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War being held inside prisons in North America which many people don't know. So, can you elaborate from which movements these prisoners originate and what kind of politics are reflected by the actions for which they have been 'buried alive', as you say.

SR: Oh yeah, as you say, it's a very well kept secret about our existences, all of us. The breadth of struggle that gets buried, or is attempted to be buried, by the government in the people that are in prison is a very rich and varied history. The United States government has unleashed a brutal attack on the Black community and on Black people in America and has for ever. I know no new news, but the largest percentage of United States Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War are Black people who have resisted, in varying forms, the racist genocide and attacks on the Black population in this country and and our Black comrades who have been involved in a political movement for national liberation and self-determination and an end to the kind of incredible attacks that are going on. I guess the Black Liberation Army, which emerged in the late 60s and early 70s, has produced a number of the political prisoners and they have been in jail since then. There are over 25 Black Liberation Army Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War in United States prisons. One of the people who was in the Black Panther Party, who was recently released after 20 years in prison, is Dhourba Bin Wahad. He was a leader of the New York Black Panthers and he was in prison on a frame-up and was recently released. So there's a breadth from the black movement of Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners. There are, I think, 20 or 25 Puerto Rican Independentistas who are held in United States prisons who are both Prisoners of War, comrades who claim the status of combatants from the national liberation clandestine forces from their country, and Political Prisoners who have been imprisoned as a result of repression against the independent movement both in Puerto Rico and in the United States. And then there are Native American Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War; the most well known being Leonard Peltier, but certainly not the only one. Those are, I think, the bulk of comrades in prison who are struggling for their liberation, their human rights, self- determination and liberation. They have all acted on their beliefs and that has taken them outside of the framework of United States law. There's also a whole other group of people inside United States prisons who are political and who are political prisoners who are in prison as a result of being framed or as a result of racism, and by that I mean racist attacks against them that have put them, as a result of resisting those attacks, in prison. Somebody like Gary Tyler who is a Black brother whose been in prison for, I think, 15 years at this point, who was attacked by a white young gang in the south and has been framed up in a self-defense response. And then there's anti-nuclear people

who are in prison and there's 22 North Americans, white people, the anti-imperialists, which my case falls clearly within. And we are all in prison as a result of actions taken in solidarity with the national struggles inside this country and accused of being members of clandestine organizations and we're the most recent wave of political prisoners in the United States, but certainly among those 200 there is the OHIO 7--Ray Levasseur, Tom Manning, Jaan Laaman, were all accused of being in the United Freedom Front, which was a clandestine organization that engaged in armed propaganda against the government in 1980s. They're all in prison and they're all political prisoners. I could go on and on, but I guess I'll stop at that point. One thing I would add is that out of all of these, about a quarter of the 200 are wimmin, maybe a little more. Almost almost 1/3 are wimmin from the Puerto Rican movement and white wimmin, North American wimmin who are also in prison and some of the wimmin who in prison and who are political prisoners are also lesbians and identify and have been involved in the struggle around the liberation of wimmin and gay people.

SM: We have very little time left, Susan, but what I really wanted to ask you is, with the political climate being what it is today as opposed to that of the 60s, 70s and early 1980s, what do you see the role of clandestine revolutionary organizations operating inside the United States and Canada in the 1990's? I know that's a difficult question to put briefly, but if you can ...

SR: It is a really difficult questions because I think that there are numerous conditions that you really have to analyze; it's not something I can talk about briefly. The only thing I could say in answer to that question would be that the 1990's are going to see an increase in really profound repression. It's happening here and at every level of this society. Political repression, social repression, it takes ~~the~~ form, against Black people and third world people in this country, of genocide. The war on drugs inside the Black communities in this country is really a war against Black people. I think that it's truer as the dichotomy gets greater between the have's and the have-nots in this society. So I think that the movements for social change for real, that are serious about political action and resistance and support of the struggles that are indigenous to the borders of the country, are going to have to take that very seriously because I think the state is going to do, as it has done in the past, a massive sweep against the movement and if the movement doesn't realize that that's what's going on, we're going to make a lot of mistakes that we've made before, unnecessarily. There's been a series of attacks by the FBI against the most passive of the political forces in this country, that has ranged from attacking offices to setting people up to stealing files. You can see how this is the beginning of what they did in the early 60s,

that built up into a counterinsurgency war against the revolutionary forces. So I think there is a role, but I think it's primarily a defensive role at the moment because there has to be a matching up of conditions that allow for heightened militant struggle, but I definitely think there's a role to play.

SM: Well thank you Susan, and thanks a lot for being with us today on Saturday Morning Live.

SR: Okay, well listen, I'd just like to say, really quickly, that we've felt that there's been a lot of support from people up there and it's been very, very important to us in the struggle and it's also been influential to people here on the outside to say, look, there are people in Toronto who support the Resistance Conspiracy Case and what's going in Washington, so it's been a very concrete act of solidarity and we all want to thank you very, very much.

SM: Just on a personal level, Susan, let me thank you because your spirit of struggle is teaching us up here every day and we really appreciate it.

SR: Great! Forward, Forward!